THE ANATOMY OF STORY

1. STORY SPACE, STORY TIME.

a. **Linear Story**:
- In a linear story, events occur sequentially in a straight-line progression from beginning to end.
- This structure is commonly found in traditional storytelling formats and is often used in mainstream Hollywood films.
- Linear stories typically focus on a single main character's journey, following their pursuit of a desire with intensity, and witnessing their transformation along the way.

b. **Meandering Story**:
- Meandering stories follow a winding path without a clear direction, much like a river or a wandering journey.
- These stories may cover a wide range of events and encounters, often involving the protagonist traveling through various settings and meeting diverse characters.
- Examples include myths like the Odyssey or adventure novels like "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," where the protagonist's journey takes them through a series of episodic adventures.

c. **Spiral Story**:
- Spiral narratives involve a recurring pattern of returning to a central event or theme and exploring it at progressively deeper levels.
- These stories often focus on psychological or emotional exploration, delving into the protagonist's memories or inner conflicts.

- Thrillers like "Vertigo" or "Memento" may use the spiral structure to unravel mysteries or reveal hidden truths through repeated revisitations of key events.

d. **Branching Story**:
   - Branching narratives feature multiple interconnected paths that diverge and converge, creating a complex network of storylines.
   - Each branch may explore different perspectives or scenarios within the same overarching narrative, offering readers or viewers a nonlinear experience.
   - Examples include interactive fiction or stories with ensemble casts like "American Graffiti," where various characters' storylines intersect and intertwine.

e. **Explosive Story**:
   - While not strictly a narrative structure in itself, explosive storytelling implies the appearance of simultaneous action or events happening all at once.
   - This pattern is often used in conjunction with branching narratives or cross-cutting techniques in filmmaking to create a sense of urgency or heightened tension.
   - Stories like "Pulp Fiction" or "Traffic" may utilize explosive elements to showcase multiple characters and plotlines unfolding concurrently.

2. PREMISE.

a. **Premises:** The premise is your story stated in one sentence. It is the simplest combination of character and plot and typically consists of some event that starts the action, some sense of the main character, and some sense of the outcome of the story.

Some examples:

- **The Godfather:** The youngest son of a Mafia family takes revenge on the men who shot his father and becomes the new Godfather.
- **Star Wars:** When a princess falls into mortal danger, a young man uses his skills as a fighter to save her and defeat the evil forces of a galactic empire.

b. Developing your premises:

i. Write something that change your life.

- **Exercise 1: Wish List**
  - Write down everything you would like to see on screen, in a book, or at the theater.
  - Include characters, plot twists, dialogue lines, themes, genres, etc.
  - Don't reject ideas due to cost or feasibility.
  - Don't organize while writing; let ideas flow freely.
  - Use as many sheets of paper as needed.

- **Exercise 2: Premise List**
  - Create a list of every premise you've ever thought of.
  - Express each premise in one sentence for clarity.
  - Take as many sheets of paper as necessary.
  - Aim to see all premises together in one place.

- **Analysis:**

- Lay out both lists and study them together.
- Look for recurring core elements across both lists.
- Notice recurring characters, dialogue styles, genres, themes, etc.
- Identify key patterns to understand your vision as a writer and individual.

- **Purpose:**
  a. Designed to open up and integrate your deep-seated preferences and ideas.

  b. Doesn't guarantee a life-changing story but enhances personal and original storytelling.

- **Conclusion:**
  - Regularly revisit your wish list and premise list for self-exploration.
  - Your vision as a writer and person is reflected in these exercises.

ii. Look for what possible.

- **Explore your options.** The intent here is to brainstorm the many different paths the idea can take and then to choose the best one.

- **Brainstorming Methods:**
  a. **Exploring Options:** Brainstorm various paths the idea could potentially follow and then select the most promising one.

b. **Identifying Promises:** Look for expectations generated by the idea; these "promises" indicate what must happen to satisfy the audience in a full story.
c. **Utilizing "What If" Questions:** Asking "What if...?" allows exploration of both the story idea and the writer's imagination. It helps define the story world's boundaries and encourages creativity.

- **Creative Freedom:**
  a. **Encouraging Free Thought:** Let your mind wander freely without censoring or judging ideas. Avoid dismissing any idea as "stupid," as unconventional ideas often lead to creative breakthroughs.

iii. Identify the Story Challenges and Problems.

- Few Examples:
  a. **Star Wars**:

  - Introduce a wide range of characters quickly and maintain their interactions over vast space and time.
  - Make the futuristic story believable and recognizable in the present.
  - Create character change in a hero who is morally good from the beginning.

  b. **Forrest Gump**:

- Turn forty years of historical moments into a cohesive, organic, personal story.
- Create a mentally challenged hero who can drive the plot, have deep insights, and experience character change while balancing whimsy with genuine sentiment.

iv. Find the Designing Principle.

- The designing principle is what organizes the story as a whole. It is the internal logic of the story, what makes the parts hang together organically so that the story becomes greater than the sum of its parts. It is what makes the story original.

- Designing principle = story process + original execution

- Find the designing principle, and stick to it. Be diligent in discovering this principle, and never take your eye off it during the long writing process.

- One way of coming up with a designing principle is to use a journey or similar traveling metaphor

- Example: Characterization, Plot Structure, Conflict and Tension, Theme, Pacing, Setting, Point of View, Symbolism and Imagery, Foreshadowing and Subtext ,Resolution and Closure etc….

v. **Determine Your Best Character in the Idea.**

- Always tell a story about your best character.

- "Best" doesn't mean "nicest." Best means "the most fascinating, challenging, and complex," even if that character isn't particularly likable.

- Reason to tell story about the best character to keep your interest, and the audience's interest go. You always want this character driving the action.

- How to determine? **Ask questions to yourself:**
  - Who do I love?
  - Do I want to see him act?
  - Do I love the way he thinks?
  - Do I care about the challenges he has to overcome?

- If you can't find a character you love implied in the story idea, move on to another idea. If you find him but he is not currently the main character, change the premise right now so that he is.

- If you are developing an idea that seems to have multiple main characters, you will have as many story lines as main characters, and so you must find the best character for each story line.

vi. **Get a Sense of the Central Conflict.**

- Who fights whom over what?" and answer the question in one succinct line.

- The answer to that is what your story is really about, because all conflict in the story will essentially boil down to this one issue.

- But you need to keep this one-line statement of conflict, along with the designing principle, in front of you at all times.

vii. **Get a Sense of the Single Cause-and-Effect Pathway.**

- Every good, organic story has a single cause-and-effect pathway: A leads to B, which leads to C, and so on all the way to Z.

- **For Example:** The youngest son of a Mafia family takes revenge on the men who shot his father and becomes the new Godfather.

- If you are developing a premise with many main characters, each story line must have a single cause-and-effect path. And all the story lines should come together to form a larger, all-encompassing spine.

viii. **Determine Your Hero's Possible Character Change.**

- **W*A = C**
  - where W stands for weaknesses, both psychological and moral; A represents the struggle to accomplish the basic action in the middle of the story; and C stands for the changed person.

- How does the act of struggling to do the basic action (A) lead the character to change from W to C? Notice that A, the basic action, is the fulcrum. A character with certain weaknesses, when being put through the wringer of a particular struggle, is forged and tempered into a changed being.

- **KEY POINT:** The basic action should be the one action best able to force the character to deal with his weaknesses and change.

- Write down a number of possible options for the hero's weaknesses and change

- The key to doing this is to start with the basic action and then go to the opposites of that action. This will tell yon who your hero is at the beginning of the story (his weaknesses) and who he is at the end (how he has changed). The steps work like this:
    - Write your simple premise line. (Be open to modifying this premise line once you discover the character change.)
    - Determine the basic action of your hero over the course of the story.
    - Come up with the opposites of A (the basic action) for both W (the hero's weaknesses, psychological and moral) and C (changed person).

- **For Example: The Godfather**

- Premise The youngest son of a Mafia family takes revenge on the men who shot his father and becomes the new Godfather.
- W—weaknesses at the beginning: unconcerned, afraid, mainstream, legitimate, separated from the family, A—basic action: takes revenge, C—changed person: tyrannical, absolute ruler of the family

ix. **Figure Out the Hero's Possible Moral Choice**

- The central theme of the story should be crystallized by a moral choice the hero must make, typically near the end.

- Theme is expressed through the structure of the story, known as the moral argument, where the author makes a case for how to live through the actions of characters.

- Avoid giving the hero a fake choice, where the outcome is obvious.

- A true choice involves selecting one of two positive outcomes or, rarely, avoiding one of two negative outcomes.

- Make the options as equal as possible, with one seeming only slightly better than the other.

- Examples of choices between two positives: love and honor (e.g., in "A Farewell to Arms," the hero chooses love; in "The Maltese Falcon," the hero chooses honor).

- This technique is about finding possible moral choices, knowing that the choice may change as the story develops.

x. **Gauge the Audience Appeal**
   - Premise evaluation: Consider whether the storyline is unique and captivating beyond personal interest.
   - Popularity and commercial appeal: Assess whether the premise has the potential to interest a wide audience.
   - Importance of self-interest: Emphasize the significance of writing for oneself but not exclusively.
   - Avoiding either-or thinking: Reject the notion that writing for personal fulfillment and commercial success are mutually exclusive.
   - Balancing personal passion and audience appeal: Strive to write something that resonates personally while also having broader appeal.
   - Prioritizing ideas: Acknowledge that not every idea needs to be developed into a full story and focus on those with both personal significance and audience potential.

3. THE SEVEN KEYS STEPS OF STORY STRUCTURE.

a. A story has minimum of seven steps in its growth from beginning to end:
   - Weakness and need.
   - Desire.
   - Opponent.
   - Plan.
   - Battle.
   - Self-revelation.

- New equilibrium.

b. <u>Weakness and need:</u>

i. Your hero should not be aware of his need at the beginning of the story.

ii. If he is already cognizant of what he needs, the story is over. The hero should become aware of his need at the self-revelation, near the end of the story, only after having gone through a great deal of pain (in a drama) or struggle (in a comedy).

iii. Give your hero a moral need as well as a psychological need.

iv. Keep the problem simple and specific.

v. <u>Creating the moral needs:</u>
   - **Remember the simple rule of thumb:** to have a moral need, the character must be hurting at least one other person at the beginning of the story.
   - **<u>First Technique:</u>**
     a. Begin with the psychological weakness.
     b. Figure out what kind of immoral action might naturally come out of that.
     c. Identify the deep-seated moral weakness and need that are the source of this action.
   - A **second technique** for creating a good moral need is to push a strength so far that it becomes a weakness.

a. Identify a virtue in your character. Then make him so passionate about it that it becomes oppressive.
b. Come up with a value the character believes in. Then find the negative version of that value.

c. <u>Desire:</u>

i. **<u>Clear Distinction:</u>** Need and desire are distinct elements in storytelling. Need relates to overcoming a character's weakness, while desire is an external goal (signifies the character's pursuit of a specific goal).

ii. Connection to Audience Engagement: Need remains hidden beneath the surface, showing the audience how the hero must change for a better life. Desire, on the other hand, is on the surface and gives the audience something to actively root for and engage with throughout the story.

iii. Driving Force: Desire is the driving force of the story, the track that the audience "rides along" with the hero. It's what propels the narrative forward and keeps the audience invested.

iv. Fulfillment of Need: In most stories, achieving the desire also fulfills the hero's need. This connection between desire and need provides a satisfying narrative arc for the audience.

v. **<u>Potential Pitfalls:</u>** Confusing need and desire or treating them as a single step can lead to storytelling pitfalls. It's crucial for writers to understand the

distinct functions of each and how they contribute to the overall narrative structure.

vi. Your hero's true desire is what he wants in this story, not what he wants in life.

d. <u>Opponent:</u>

i. To find the right opponent, start with your hero's specific goal; whoever wants to keep him from getting it is an opponent.

e. <u>Plan:</u>

f. **<u>Battle</u>**:

i. Throughout the middle of the story, the hero and opponent engage in a punch-counterpunch confrontation as each tries to win the goal. The conflict heats up. The battle is the final conflict between hero and opponent and determines which of the two characters wins the goal. The final battle may be a conflict of violence or a conflict of words.

g. <u>Self-revelation:</u>

i. Battle serves as a crucible, leading to a major revelation for the hero.
ii. Two forms of revelation: psychological and moral.
iii. Psychological revelation involves stripping away the hero's facade, facing themselves honestly.
iv. This process is active, difficult, and courageous.
v. Show the hero's insight through actions, not direct statements.
vi. Avoid preachiness to keep the audience engaged.
vii. Let the audience infer the hero's growth from their behavior.

h. **New equilibrium:**
    i. At the new equilibrium, everything returns to normal, and all desire is gone.
    ii. The hero has moved to a higher or lower level as a result of going through his crucible.
    iii. A fundamental and permanent change has occurred in the hero.
        - If the self- revelation is positive-the hero realizes who he truly is and learns how to live properly in the world —he moves to a higher level.
        - If the hero has a negative revelation-learning he has committed a terrible crime that expresses a corrupt personal flaw—or is incapable of having a self-revelation, the hero falls or is destroyed.

4. CHARACTER WEB.

a. To put it another way, a character is often defined by who he is not.
    i. **KEY POINT:** The most important step in creating your hero, as well as all other characters, is to connect and compare each to the others.

    ii. Each time you compare a character to your hero, you force yourself to distinguish the hero in new ways. You also start to see the secondary characters as complete human beings, as complex and as valuable as your hero.
b. All characters connect and define each other in four major ways: **by story function, archetype, theme, and opposition.**

c. By Story Function

i. Example:

- Hero: Lester
- Main Opponent: Carolyn, his wife
- Second Opponent: Jane, his daughter
- Third Opponent: Angela, Jane's pretty friend
- Fourth Opponent: Colonel Frank Fitts
- Fifth Opponent Brad: his coworker
- Ally: Ricky Fitts
- Fake-Ally Opponent: None
- Fake-Opponent Ally: None
- Subplot Characters Frank: Ricky

ii. CHARACTER TECHNIQUE: TWO MAIN CHARACTERS:

- You must detail the need of both characters at the beginning of the story, but you should give one of the characters the main desire line.

- But one of the best ways to set your love story apart is to give the woman the driving line, as in Moonstruck, Broadcast News, and Gone with the Wind.

iii. CHARACTER TECHNIQUE: MULTIPLE HEROES AND NARRATIVE DRIVE:

- **Multiple Heroes Technique:** In contrast to single main character stories, some narratives feature multiple heroes. This technique creates a sense of simultaneous story movement rather than linear action.

- **Balancing Simultaneous Action and Linear Narrative:** While multiple heroes add complexity, it's crucial to maintain a forward narrative drive. Even in simultaneous stories, some linear quality must sequence events in time.

- **Seven Steps of Character Development:** Each main character in a multihero story should undergo the seven steps of character development: weakness and need, desire, opponent, plan, battle, self-revelation, and new equilibrium.

- These are some of the techniques you can use to add narrative drive to a multihero story:

  ■ Have one character emerge over the course of the story as more central than the rest.
  ■ Give all the characters the same desire line.
  ■ Make the hero of one story line the opponent in another story line.
  ■ Connect the characters by making them all examples of a single subject or theme.
  ■ Use a cliffhanger at the end of one line to trigger a jump to another line.
  ■ Funnel the characters from many locations into one.
  ■ Reduce the time. For example, the story may take place over one day or one night.
  ■ Show the same holiday or group event at least three times over the course of the story to indicate forward drive and change.
  ■ Have characters occasionally meet by coincidence.

iv. **CHARACTER TECHNIQUE: CUTTING EXTRANEOUS CHARACTERS**

- "Does this character serve an important function in the overall story?" If he doesn't—if he only provides texture or color—you should consider cutting him entirely. His limited value probably won't justify the time he takes up in the story line.

d. CHARACTER, WEB BY ARCHETYPE

i. But it is a blunt tool in the writer's repertoire. Unless you give the archetype detail, it can become a stereotype.

ii. **KEY POINT:** Always make the archetype specific and individual to your unique character.

iii. **INDIVIDUALIZING CHARACTERS IN THE WEB:**

a. KEY POINT: You begin individuating your characters by finding the moral problem at the heart of the premise. You then play out the various possibilities of the moral problem in the body of the story.

b. Create a group of opponents (and allies) who force the hero to deal with the central moral problem. And each opponent is a variation on the theme; each deals with the same moral problem in a different way.

i. Begin by writing down what you think is the central moral problem of your story. If you worked through the techniques of the premise, you already know this.

ii. Compare your hero and all other characters on these parameters:
    - weaknesses
    - need—both psychological and moral
    - desire
    - values
    - power, status, and ability
    - how each faces the central moral problem in the story

iii. When making these comparisons, start with the most important relationship in any story, that between the hero and the main opponent. In many ways, this opponent is the key to creating the story, because not only is he the most effective way of defining the hero, but he also shows you the secrets to creating a great character web.

iv. After comparing the hero to the main opponent, compare the hero to the other opponents and then to the allies. Finally, compare the opponents and allies to one another.

v. Remember that each character should show us a different approach to the hero's central moral problem (variations on a theme).

c. <u>Creating the hero:</u>

I. Make your lead character constantly fascinating.

- ensure hero consistently captivate the audience's interest with no dull moments.

- make the character mysterious, hinting that they are hiding something that makes audience **"That character is hiding something, and I want to find out what it is."**

II. Make the audience identify with the character, but not too much.

- Audiences identify with characters based on their desires and the moral problems they face, rather than specific traits like background or appearance.

- Be aware that the audience should not identify too much with the character, or they will not be able to step back and see how the hero changes and grows.

III. Make the audience empathize with your hero, not sympathize.

- **KEY POINT:** What's really important is that audiences understand the character but not necessarily like everything he does.

- **KEY POINT:** Always show why your hero acts as he does.

IV. Give your hero a moral as well as a psychological need.

d. Creating Your Hero, Step 2: Character Change:

I. The Self Expressed as a Character:

- **The Heroic Self:** A single entity driven by an internal sense of destiny, often depicted as a warrior hero in myths.
- **The Complex Self:** A unit composed of conflicting desires, seeking connection with others and sometimes even assimilating them, prevalent in modern drama.
- **The Role-playing Self:** Defined by societal roles, as portrayed by Twain, emphasizing how society shapes identity.
- **The Shifting Self:** An unstable collection of images, portrayed by Kafka, Borges, and Faulkner, commonly seen in horror fiction like vampires and werewolves.

II. **KEY POINT:** Character change doesn't happen at the end of the story; it happens at the beginning. More precisely, it is made possible at the beginning by how you set it up.

III. **KEY POINT:** Don't think of your main character as a fixed, complete person whom you then tell a story about. You must think of your hero as a range of change, a range of

possibilities, from the very beginning. You have to determine the range of change of the hero at the start of the writing process, or change will be impossible for the hero at the end of the story.

IV. **KEY POINT:** True character change involves a challenging and changing of basic beliefs, leading to new moral action by the hero.

V. Common Types of Character Change:

a. Child to Adult:
   - shows a young person challenging and changing basic beliefs and then taking new moral action.

b. Adult to Leader:
   - concerned only with finding the right path for himself to realizing that he must help others find the right path as well.

c. Cynic to Participant:
   - He has pulled away from the larger society and is interested in pleasure, personal freedom, and money. By the end of the story, the hero has learned the value of making the larger world right and has rejoined society as a leader.

d. Leader to Tyrant:
   - the character moves from helping a few others find the right path to forcing others to follow his path.

e. Leader to Visionary
   - In "Leader to Visionary" change, a character shifts from guiding individuals to envisioning societal transformation, as seen in religious tales like Moses' narrative. For instance, in "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," Roy envisions humanity's future in a spaceship. However, many writers struggle with this change due to a lack of a clear vision for societal improvement. The character's vision should offer

specific moral guidance, akin to Moses' Ten Commandments or Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

f. Metamorphosis:
   - This is radical and costly change, and it implies a self that is initially weak, fractured, or devastated. At its best, this development shows an act of extreme empathy. At its worst, it marks the complete destruction of the old self and entrapment in the new.

VI. CHARACTER TECHNIQUE: DOUBLE REVERSAL:

i. The "double reversal" is an advanced storytelling technique that goes beyond the typical hero's self-revelation by also giving the main opponent a self-revelation. This adds complexity and emotional impact to character change in a story.

   a. Give both the hero and the main opponent a weakness and a need.
   b. Ensure the opponent is human, capable of learning and changing.
   c. Provide both hero and opponent with a self-revelation during or after the conflict.
   d. Connect the two self-revelations so that each character learns something from the other.
   e. The moral vision presented in the story is the synthesis of what both characters learn.

ii. This technique allows for a richer exploration of moral themes and character development, offering the

audience two insights into how to act and live in the world. While not commonly used, it can be especially effective in love stories where the hero and lover (main opponent) learn from each other.

iii. By employing the double reversal technique, writers can create more nuanced and compelling narratives that resonate with audiences on a deeper level.

VII. <u>Creating Character Change in Your Story:</u>

i. **<u>KEY POINT:</u>** Always begin at the end of the change, with the self - revelation; then go back and determine the starting point of the change, which is the hero's need and desire; then figure out the steps of development in between.

ii. Remember, the self-revelation is made possible at the beginning of the story. This means that a good self- revelation has two parts: the revelation itself and the setup.

- <u>The moment of revelation should have these qualities:</u>
  - It should be sudden, so that it has maximum dramatic force for the hero and the audience.
  - It should create a burst of emotion for the audience as they share the realization with the hero.
  - It should be new information for the hero: he must see, for the first time,

that he has been living a lie about himself and that he has hurt others.
    - It should trigger the hero to take new moral action immediately, proving that the revelation is real and has profoundly changed him.

- <u>The setup to the revelation should have these qualities:</u>
    - The hero must be a thinking person, someone who is capable of seeing the truth and knowing right action.
    - The hero must be hiding something from himself.
    - This lie or delusion must be hurting the hero in a very real way.

e. <u>Creating Your Hero, Step 3: Desire</u>

i. **<u>One Desire Line:</u>** Stick to a single, overarching goal for your hero that increases in importance and intensity throughout the story. Multiple desire lines will confuse the audience and dilute the narrative drive.

ii. **<u>Specificity:</u>** Make the desire specific, with a clear moment in the story where success or failure is evident. The more specific the desire, the better. Avoid vague desires like "independence," as they lack a clear moment of accomplishment.

iii. **<u>Accomplishment Near the End:</u>** Ensure that the hero's desire is accomplished, if at all, near the end of the story. If the goal is achieved too early, either end the story there

or introduce a new desire line. Extending the hero's desire line almost to the story's conclusion maintains narrative unity and drive.

f. <u>Creating Your Hero, Step 4: The Opponent:</u>

i. KEY POINT: The main character is only as good as the person he fights.

ii. **Make the opponent necessary:** They should be the one person best able to exploit the hero's weaknesses, pushing the hero to grow or face destruction.

iii. **Make them human:** The opponent should be as complex and valuable as the hero, serving as a mirror or double to the protagonist.

iv. **Give them opposing values:** Their actions and beliefs should clash with those of the hero, creating conflict that highlights the story's central themes.

v. **Provide a strong but flawed moral argument:** The opponent should believe they're justified in their actions, even if their reasoning is ultimately flawed.

vi. **Highlight similarities with the hero:** By sharing certain traits or experiences, the hero and opponent present different approaches to the same dilemmas, emphasizing their humanity and complexity.

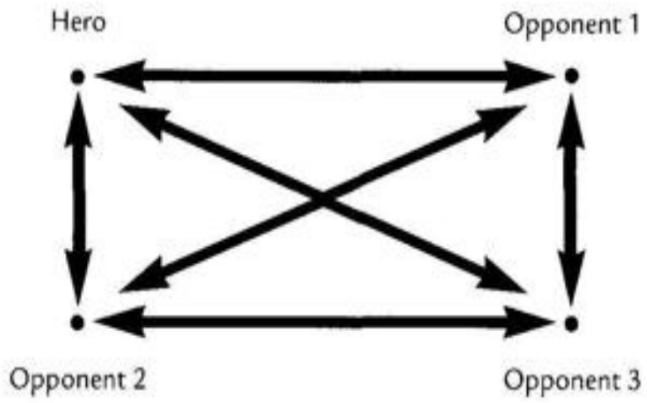
vii. **Keep them in close proximity:** Conflict thrives when the hero and opponent remain in the same space, allowing tension to build and forcing them to confront each other.

e. BUILDING CONFLICT

i. KEY POINT: A simplistic opposition between two characters kills any chance at depth, complexity, or the reality of human life in your story. For that, you need a web of oppositions.

ii. Four-Corner Opposition:

Four-corner opposition:



- Each opponent should use a different way of attacking the hero's great weakness.

- Try to place each character in conflict, not only with the hero but also with every other character.

- Put the values of all four characters in conflict.
    a. KEY POINT: Be as detailed as possible when listing the values of each character.
    b. Don't just come up with a single value for each character. Think of a cluster of values that each can believe in. The values in each cluster are unique but also related to one another.

c. KEY POINT: Look for the positive and negative versions of the same value.

- Push the characters to the corners.
  a. make each character as different as possible from the other three.

- Extend the four-corner pattern to every level of the story.

f. Brecht is saying that every actor in a play needs to focus on serving the overall story. When an actor looks at their role in relation to the entire play, they realize that focusing too much on small details about their character can actually detract from the play's message and make their performance less impactful. Even though the audience cares most about how the main character has changed, this change can't be shown unless every character, including the main one, plays their role well.

5. MORAL ARGUMENTS:

- Moral argument through action rather than verbal debate.

a. Finding the theme line in the designing principle.

i. The first step in crafting an argument of action is to condense the theme into a single line, emphasizing the moral implications of actions on a person's life.

ii. The designing principle, akin to the premise line, is crucial for weaving an organic narrative where actions have moral effects.

iii. **Harry Potter Books Example:**

- Designing Principle: A magician prince learns to be a man and a king by attending a boarding school for sorcerers over the course of seven school years.

- Theme Line: When you are blessed with great talent and power, you must become a leader and sacrifice for the good of others.

iv. Techniques for developing the theme include:

- **Traveling Metaphor:** Utilizing journeys to embed moral sequences, such as Huck's trip down the Mississippi symbolizing deeper slavery or Marlow's journey into the jungle representing moral confusion.

- **Single Grand Symbol:** Employing a single symbol to represent central moral elements, like the scarlet letter 'A' in The Scarlet Letter signifying adultery and societal hypocrisy.

- **Connecting Two Grand Symbols:** Linking two symbols to represent moral poles in a sequence, often indicating declining morality, as seen in Heart of Darkness with the dark heart and the center of moral darkness, supplemented by the traveling metaphor.

b. SPLITTING THE THEME INTO OPPOSITIONS

i. The hero's moral development is crucial to the story, starting with a moral flaw and culminating in a moral self-revelation and decision.
ii. The hero's moral decision often comes down to a choice between two options, representing the primary thematic opposition of the story.

iii. This decision is typically made just after the hero's moral self-revelation, which guides them towards the right choice.

iv. The examples provided, like "Casablanca" and "The Maltese Falcon," illustrate how the hero's final decision contrasts with their initial moral flaw or dilemma.

v. The moral decision is the narrow point of the thematic funnel, where everything in the story converges.

vi. The hero's choice often involves sacrificing personal desires or relationships for a greater moral cause, such as justice or fighting against oppression.

vii. The moral oppositions are central to character development and plot progression, driving the narrative towards its resolution.

viii. **<u>Characters as Variations on a Theme:</u>**
- **<u>Central Moral Problem:</u>** Revisit the hero's final moral decision and premise line to understand the core dilemma they face, such as loyalty versus betrayal, justice versus mercy, or self-interest versus sacrifice.

- **Apply to Major Characters:** Ensure each major character grapples with the same moral problem as the hero, but in their unique way, enriching the theme with diverse perspectives.

- **Compare Hero and Main Opponent:** Analyze how the hero and main opponent approach the central moral problem differently, then compare the hero to other opponents to understand their place in the moral landscape.

- **Develop Moral Arguments:** Through dialogue, have each major character articulate their moral stance, justifying their actions in relation to the central problem, incorporating personal values, experiences, or external pressures for depth.

ix. The Characters' Values in Conflict:

- Using your character web, now place the values of each of the major characters in conflict as these people compete for the same goal.

    a. Identify a set of values for your hero and each of the other major characters. Remember, values are deep- seated beliefs about what makes a good life.
    b. Try to give a cluster of values to each character. Make each set of values as different from the others as possible. 4. As your hero and his opponents fight over the goal, make sure their values come into direct conflict.

- KEY POINT: Your moral argument will always be simplistic if you use a two-part opposition, like good versus evil. Only a web of moral oppositions (four-corner opposition is one such web) can give the audience a sense of the moral complexity of real life.

c. THEME THROUGH STRUCTURE:

i. The Relationship Between Structure and Theme

- **Structure as Content**: The structure of a story is not just a vessel for content; it is content itself, particularly when it comes to conveying the theme.
- **Expansion of Theme**: Throughout the story, the theme gradually expands in the minds of the audience, with the converging structure serving as a catalyst for this expansion.

ii. Expressing Moral Argument Through

- **Values**: The hero begins with a set of beliefs and values.
- **Moral Weakness**: The hero, though not inherently evil, exhibits flaws or weaknesses that lead to harm towards others.
- **Moral Need**: The hero must learn and grow to act properly towards others, overcoming their moral weaknesses.
- **First Immoral Action**: Early evidence of the hero's moral flaw is demonstrated through actions that harm others.
- **Desire and Drive**: The hero pursues a goal fervently, leading to conflict with an opponent who shares the same goal but possesses differing values.

- **Immoral Actions and Criticism**: As the conflict intensifies, the hero resorts to immoral actions, facing criticism from others.
- **Attack by Ally**: The hero's closest ally challenges their methods, highlighting the moral dilemma.
- **Obsessive Drive and Intensified Immoral Actions**: Driven by desperation, the hero becomes obsessed with achieving the goal, leading to further immoral actions and heightened criticism.

iii. **Explosion of Theme at Story's End**
- **Battle**: The final conflict determines the outcome, revealing which values prevail.
- **Final Action Against Opponent**: The hero may take one last action, moral or immoral, against the opponent during or before the battle.
- **Moral Self-Revelation**: The crucible of the battle sparks a realization in the hero, leading to a profound understanding of their own moral shortcomings and how to rectify them.
- **Moral Decision**: The hero makes a crucial choice, affirming their moral self-revelation.
- **Thematic Revelation**: The theme reaches its zenith in the thematic revelation, transcending the individual characters and imparting a profound insight into human behavior and values.

iv. **Balancing Hero and Opponent in Moral Argument**
- **Importance of Balance**: A balance of power between the hero and opponent is crucial for the moral argument to resonate effectively.
- **Imbalance Pitfalls**: If the hero is too strong or too simplistic, moral mistakes may not be

adequately tested. Conversely, if the opponent is too overpowering, the hero may become a victim rather than an active participant in the moral conflict.

d. MORAL ARGUMENT TECHNIQUE: BALANCE MORAL ARGUMENT WITH PLOT

i. Imbalance between Moral Argument and Plot

- Preachiness in stories often results from an imbalance between moral argument and plot.
- Moral argument should be supported by a robust plot to avoid coming across as sermonizing.

ii. Plot as Choreography of Actions

- Plot involves a choreography of actions by the hero and opponents, aiming to surprise the audience.
- Surprise and magic in plot elevate the moral sequence, giving it impact.
- Example: The Verdict

    a. Illustrates the balance between moral argument and plot in the story of Frank's journey from moral weakness to justice.
    b. Plot supports the moral arc, ensuring it doesn't come across as preachy.

iii. Variants of Moral Argument

- Good Versus Bad
    a. Simple moral tale where hero remains good and opponent bad.

b. Hero wins due to inherent goodness.
c. Examples: Star Wars, Forrest Gump, The Wizard of Oz.

- Tragedy
    a. Hero has fatal flaw, gains self-revelation too late, leading to destruction.
    b. Shifts focus from external forces to hero's choices.
    c. Examples: Hamlet, King Lear, American Beauty.

- Pathos
    a. Hero faces powerful opponent, takes immoral actions, fails to win.
    b. Ends in despair or suicide, evoking sympathy and admiration.
    c. Examples: Death of a Salesman, Dog Day Afternoon, Cinema Paradiso.

- Satire and Irony
    a. Satirizes societal beliefs, characters pursue goals with destructive consequences.
    b. Hero's self-revelation questions societal values.
    c. Examples: Pride and Prejudice, The Graduate, MAS*H.

- Black Comedy
    a. Characters pursue illogical goals within a destructive system.
    b. No self-revelation, audience realizes absurdity.

c. Examples: Dr. Strangelove, Catch-22, Goodfellas.

- Key Elements of Each Variant

a. Each variant offers a unique approach to moral argument, emphasizing different aspects of plot, character, and societal critique.
b. Effective execution relies on careful balance and integration with the story's narrative and themes.

iv. Combining moral arguments
v. The unique moral visions.

6. STORY WORLD:

a. How are you going to apply these techniques to your story? The se-quence lor creating your story world goes like this (the first three steps have to do with creating the story space, the last two with the work! over rime):

- We'll begin once again with the designing principle, since this is what holds everything together. The designing principle will tell you how to define the overall arena in which your story will occur.

- Then we'll divide the arena into visual oppositions, based on how your characters oppose one another.

- Then we'll detail the world using three of the four major building blocks—natural settings, artificial spaces, and technology—that make up the story

world, with an emphasis on what these spaces and forms inherently or typically mean to an audience.

- Next, we'll connect the story world to your hero's overall development and apply the fourth major building block of the story world, time.

- Finally, we'll track the detailed development of the story world through the story structure by creating a visual seven steps.

- **Example:**

    - Long Day's Journey into Night
      ■ Designing Principle: As a family moves from dayinto night, its members are confronted with the sins and ghosts of their past.

      ■ Theme Line: You must face the truth about yourself and others and forgive

      ■ Story World: The dark house, full of crannies where family secrets can be hidden away.

b. The Arena of story:

i. Creating the Arena:
When crafting your story world, it's crucial to establish a single arena, a defined space where all the drama unfolds. Here are four ways to create this arena without losing the richness of your setting:

- Large Umbrella and Crosscutting: Start with a broad view of the world and then zoom in on smaller settings as the story progresses. This

maintains unity while exploring various locations.

- Journey Along a Single Line: Send your hero on a journey through a consistent environment, showing its development along a clear path. This creates a sense of unity despite different locations.
- Circular Journey: Have the hero embark on a journey that brings them back home at the end. This highlights character change against a backdrop of familiarity.
- Fish out of Water: Begin in one setting, showcase the hero's talents, then transition them to a completely different environment where those talents are tested. This technique creates unity through the hero's consistent traits.

ii. Oppositions Within the Arena

Your story world isn't just a backdrop; it's a stage for your characters to clash and evolve. Just as you define character dynamics through oppositions, you can shape the story world by highlighting visual contrasts. Here's how to do it:

- Identify Character Conflicts: Examine how characters clash, especially over values, as these conflicts will manifest visually in the world.
- Explore Visual Oppositions: Look for three or four central visual conflicts that mirror character oppositions. These will add depth and coherence to your story world.

iii. **Example:**

Main Opposition:

- New York City vs. Skull Island: Denham thrives in the urban jungle of New York, where he's the master of spectacle. In contrast, Skull Island is a primal realm ruled by Kong, symbolizing untamed nature.

Subworld Contrasts:

- City Dwellers: Denham and his associates represent human ambition and commercial exploitation.
- Skull Island Villagers: Inhabitants of Skull Island revere Kong as a deity, living in harmony with the jungle.
- Prehistoric Beasts: The jungle is home to various creatures, adding to the primal atmosphere and posing challenges to both humans and Kong.

c. DETAILING THE STORY WORLD:

i. Natural Settings:

- Ocean: Symbolizes abstract contest and grand-scale struggle. Surface represents two-dimensionality, while the deep evokes weightless utopian dreamworlds.

- Outer Space: Infinite black nothingness with unlimited diversity. Abstract yet natural, offering unending adventure and exploration.

- Forest: Natural cathedral conveying both comfort and foreboding. Symbolizes contemplation, love, and danger, often used in fairy tales and fantasy.

- Jungle: State of nature suffocatingly powerful, reducing humanity to primal instincts. Expresses evolution and the dominance of nature over man.

- Desert and Ice: Places of death and isolation, where survival toughens and individuals grow through adversity.

- Island: Separated place for social experimentation, often depicting Utopian or dystopian societies and showcasing the workings of evolution.

- Mountain: Symbolizes greatness and insight, associated with revelation and confrontation with nature.

- Plain: Represents equality and freedom, contrasting with the jungle's oppressive nature. Site of life-and-death struggles and mediocrity.

- River: Path of physical, moral, and emotional passage, symbolizing journeys and transitions in storytelling.

ii. Man-made Spaces:

- The House: Represents intimacy, protection, and family. Offers visual oppositions of safety vs. adventure, ground vs. sky, and cellar vs. attic.

- The Bar: Serves as a microcosm of society, reflecting both dystopian and Utopian elements. Encourages a sense of community and belonging.

- The Terrifying House: Manifestation of the character's fears and weaknesses, often depicting decay and imprisonment. Symbolizes the power of the past over the present.

- The Road: Opposite of the house, calling for exploration and courage. Represents linear story development and personal growth through travel and encounters.

iii. STORY WORLD TECHNIQUE: COMBINING NATURAL SETTINGS WITH THE CITY

City Metaphors:

- **City as Mountain:**
    a. Hierarchical representation with powerful elites at the summit and impoverished masses at the base often utilized in crime fantasies like Batman stories.
- **City as Ocean:**
    a. Emphasizes three-dimensional living with different layers and characters unaware of each other.
    b. Represents freedom, style, and love, akin to a playground.

- **City as Jungle:**
    a. Depicts a densely packed, dangerous environment where enemies lurk from all directions.
    b. Commonly seen in detective and cop stories.
- **City as Forest:**
    a. Offers a positive portrayal with a sense of community and coziness amidst towering structures.
    b. Evokes a utopian vision of urban life.

Miniatures:

- **Purpose**:
    a. Provides a holistic view of the story world.
    b. Expresses various facets of characters.
    c. Illustrates power dynamics and themes of tyranny.
- Examples:
    a. Citizen Kane: Utilizes miniatures to depict significant moments and themes in Kane's life.
    b. The Shining: Foreshadows events and themes through miniature representations.

Scale Manipulation:

- **Getting Small:**
    a. Characters shrinking offer fresh perspectives and highlight heroism.
    b. Examples include Honey, I Shrunk the Kids and Alice in Wonderland.

- **Getting Big:**
    a. Less interesting as it diminishes subtlety and plot possibilities.
    b. Exceptions like Big involve unique twists to the concept.

Passageways Between Worlds:

- **Function:**
    a. Facilitates character movement and transition between subworlds.
    b. Prepares the audience for changes in the story world's rules.

- **Examples:**
    a. Rabbit hole (Alice in Wonderland), wardrobe closet (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe).

Technology (Tools):

- **Role:**
    a. Extension of human capabilities and identity.
    b. Highlights societal shifts and power dynamics.

- **Applications:**
    a. Science fiction: Reflects the writer's view of universal evolution.
    b. Action stories: Emphasizes hero's resourcefulness with everyday objects.
    c. Drama: Defines characters' lives and struggles, like in Death of a Salesman.

iv. CONNECTING THE WORLD TO THE HERO'S OVERALL DEVELOPMENT

- KEY POINT: In most stories you write, the world is a physical expression of who your hero is and how he develops.
- KEY POINT: Always ask yourself, how is the world of slavery an expression of my hero's great weakness? The world should embody, highlight, or accentuate your hero's weakness or draw it out in its worst form.

- **Slavery to Greater Slavery to Freedom:**
    a. The hero starts in a world of oppression, struggles towards a goal, experiences setbacks, but ultimately achieves freedom through self-revelation.
    b. Examples: Star Wars episodes 4-6, The Lord of the Rings.

- **Slavery to Greater Slavery or Death:**
    a. The protagonist is enslaved by inner weaknesses and a corrupt world, leading to a negative self-revelation or demise.
    b. Examples: Death of a Salesman, A Streetcar Named Desire.

- **Slavery to Great Slavery to Freedom:**
    a. The hero's self-revelation comes too late to save themselves, but their sacrifice benefits the world after their demise.
    b. Examples: Hamlet, A Tale of Two Cities.

- **Slavery to Temporary Freedom to Greater Slavery or Death:**

a. The hero experiences temporary freedom in a subworld but ultimately fails to realize their true self, leading to their downfall.
b. Examples: The Wild Bunch, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

- **Freedom to Slavery or Death:**
  a. The story begins in a Utopian world but descends into chaos due to external forces or character flaws.
  b. Examples: King Lear, Excalibur.

- **Freedom to Slavery to Freedom:**
  a. Initially in a world of freedom, the hero faces an attack leading to decline, but ultimately overcomes the challenge to create a stronger Utopia.
  b. Examples: Meet Me in St. Louis, Cinema Paradiso.

- **Apparent Freedom to Greater Slavery to Freedom:**
  a. The world initially seems utopian but is revealed to be corrupt. The hero fights through the corruption to establish a more just society.
  b. Examples: Jurassic Park, Goodfellas.

v. **Time in Story Worlds: Techniques and Fallacies**

- **Fallacies of Past and Future:**
  a. The fallacy of the past assumes historical fiction should not be judged by modern standards, but it's a tool for reflecting on contemporary values.

b. The fallacy of the future assumes science fiction predicts the future, but it actually abstracts present dilemmas and choices.

- **Seasons:**
  a. Seasonal cycles and rituals convey meaning about the hero or the world.
  b. Showing seasonal changes can symbolize growth or decay.
  c. Using all four seasons can suggest a shift from linear to circular storytelling.
  d. Classic connection: Summer (troubled state), Fall (decline), Winter (lowest point), Spring (overcoming).

- **Holidays and Rituals:**
  a. Holidays and rituals provide opportunities to express meaning and show development.
  b. They embody philosophical ideas and can be used to support or challenge them.
  c. Example: Jean Shepherd's holiday-themed stories evoke nostalgia and highlight personal growth.

- **The Single Day:**
  a. Focuses on simultaneous storylines within a short timeframe, maintaining narrative urgency.
  b. Twelve-hour clock creates a sense of urgency and resolution.
  c. Twenty-four-hour clock emphasizes circularity and everyday drama.

- **The Perfect Day:**

a. Depicts a harmonious moment within the story, often limited in duration.
b. Connected to communal activities within a natural time frame.
c. Example: The barn-raising scene in Witness symbolizes harmony and love.

- **Time Endpoint:**
  a. Sets a specific deadline for action to be completed, enhancing narrative tension.
  b. Common in action, thriller, caper, and suicide mission stories.
  c. Creates intense narrative drive and speed, often connected to a single location.
  d. Example: Speed, The Hunt for Red October.

- **Comedy and Time Endpoint:**
  a. In comic journey stories, a time endpoint provides a forward line amid comedic detours.
  b. Allows the audience to relax and enjoy comic moments without losing track of the main plot.
  c. Example: The Blues Brothers, Jacques Tati's Traffic.

vi. STORY WORLD THROUGH STRUCTURE:

Connecting Story World with Hero's Development: Visual Seven Steps:

- **Weakness and Need:**
  a. Hero's weakness or fear is manifested in a subworld.

b. Physical space reflects the hero's initial vulnerability.
c. Example: Luke feels stuck in a barren desert wilderness in Star Wars, symbolizing his desire for adventure and escape.

- **Desire:**
  a. Subworld where the hero expresses their goal.
  b. Space reflects the hero's aspirations and motivations.
  c. Example: Luke's desire is triggered by a hologram of Princess Leia asking for help, setting him on a path to adventure and heroism.

- **Opponent:**
  a. Opponent's world expresses power and ability to attack the hero.
  b. An extreme version of the hero's world of slavery.
  c. Example: The Death Star in Star Wars is a giant sphere, showcasing Darth Vader's dominance and the oppressive nature of the Empire.

- **Apparent Defeat or Temporary Freedom:**
  a. Hero wrongly believes they've lost to the opponent.
  b. Represents the narrowest space in the story, with forces of defeat pressing in.
  c. Example: Collapsing garbage dump with a monster underwater in Star Wars,

symbolizing the hero's moment of crisis and confinement.

- **Visit to Death:**
    a. Hero confronts mortality in a place representing decline and death.
    b. Encounter with mortality or sense of impending doom.
    c. Example: Bridge scene in The Wild Bunch, where characters face the possibility of death as they attempt to cross.

- **Battle:**
    a. Final conflict occurs in the most confined space.
    b. Physical compression builds tension and intensity.
    c. Example: Trench battle in Star Wars, where the hero faces their ultimate challenge in a tight space with high stakes.

- **Freedom or Slavery:**
    a. World reflects the final maturation or decline of the character.
    b. Represents the outcome of the hero's journey.
    c. Example: Hall of Heroes in Star Wars, where the hero's success is celebrated and the world is transformed by their actions.

vii. **Connecting Story World with Hero's Development: Visual Seven Steps in "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone":**

- **Harry's Problem, Ghost:**

a. Suburban house, room under the stairs.
b. Harry's initial confinement and mistreatment by his Muggle relatives symbolize his lack of belonging and knowledge of his true identity.

- **Weakness and Need:**
  a. Snake exhibit at the zoo, great hall at Hogwarts School.
  b. Harry's discovery of his magical abilities and entry into Hogwarts highlights his lack of self-mastery and training as a wizard.

- **Desire:**
  a. Hut, great hall, trapdoor.
  b. Harry's desires to attend Hogwarts, win the school cup, and solve the mystery of the Sorcerer's Stone shape his journey throughout the story.

- **Opponents:**
  a. Suburban house, classes, stadium, bathroom.
  b. Harry faces various opponents, including his Muggle relatives, Draco Malfoy, and challenges in his classes and Quidditch matches.

- **Opponent, Apparent Defeat:**
  a. Dark Forest. Harry encounters the weakened Voldemort in the Dark Forest, experiencing a moment of apparent defeat as he faces the powerful dark wizard.

- **Opponent, Battle:**
    a. Underworld of Hogwarts (trapdoor, Devil's Snare, enclosed room).
    b. Harry, Ron, and Hermione confront Voldemort in the Underworld of Hogwarts, engaging in a violent battle to protect the Sorcerer's Stone.

- **Self-Revelation:**
    a. Room of fire, infirmary.
    b. Harry discovers the power of love and sacrifice, realizing his own strength and purpose as a wizard for good.

Additional Elements:

- **Land, People, and Technology:**
    a. Blend of present-day setting with medieval elements and magical technology.

- **Systems:**
    a. Detailed rules and workings of the magical world, including Hogwarts School, houses, and Quidditch.

- **Natural Settings:**
    a. Hogwarts castle surrounded by a mountain lake and the Dark Forest.

- **Man-made Spaces:**
    a. Transition from mundane to magical worlds, including suburban streets, Diagon Alley, and Hogwarts castle.

- **Miniatures:**
    a. Quidditch as a miniature of the magical world and Harry's journey.

- **Passageways:**
    a. Symbolic gateways between mundane and magical worlds, including the brick wall, platform 9¾, and the trapdoor.

- **Technology:**
    a. Inventive magic tech, including owls for mail delivery, wands, and magical objects like the invisibility cloak and Sorcerer's Stone.

- **Seasons:**
    a. Connection between the school year's rhythm and the natural setting of Hogwarts.

- **Holiday or Ritual:**
    a. Inclusion of Halloween and Christmas as significant events in the story's progression.

7. SYMBOL WEB:

a. Symbolic Themes:

i. Depth and Intensity: Symbolic themes encapsulate entire moral arguments within an image or object, concentrating meaning intensely.

ii. Risk of Being Preachy: Symbolic themes can feel preachy if not executed with subtlety and nuance.

iii. Conflict and Complexity: Effective symbolic themes often express conflicting moral sequences, adding depth and complexity to the narrative.

iv. Example: "The Scarlet Letter" by Nathaniel Hawthorne → The scarlet letter A initially represents the simple moral argument against adultery. However, it evolves throughout the story to symbolize opposing moral arguments: the rigid, hypocritical public chastisement versus the more fluid and genuine private morality lived by the characters.

b. Symbolic Characters:

i. Character Definition: Symbols attached to characters define their essential qualities and evoke specific emotions in the audience.

ii. Consideration of Character Web: Before assigning symbols to characters, consider their relationships and oppositions within the story.

iii. Use of Symbolic Opposition: Employing opposing symbols within a character adds complexity while maintaining the benefits of symbolism.

iv. Shorthand Techniques: Categories such as gods, animals, and machines offer shorthand methods for defining characters' fundamental traits and levels of being.

v. Example: "The Scarlet Letter" by Nathaniel Hawthorne → The scarlet letter A initially represents the simple moral argument against adultery.

However, it evolves throughout the story to symbolize opposing moral arguments: the rigid, hypocritical public chastisement versus the more fluid and genuine private morality lived by the characters.

c. Symbolic Names:

i. Immediate Identification: Symbolic names, like those crafted by Charles Dickens, instantly convey characters' fundamental natures through their images and sounds.

ii. Caution in Usage: Symbolic names may draw attention to themselves if not integrated seamlessly into the narrative, particularly in post-nineteenth-century fiction.

iii. Example: "Ebenezer Scrooge" in "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens -> The name "Scrooge" immediately suggests a miserly and selfish character, emphasizing his love for money and his reluctance to share it with others.

d. Symbol Connected to Character Change:

i. Tracking Character Arcs: Symbols can track character changes by associating them with a particular symbol at the beginning and end of the story.

ii. Subtlety and Impact: Symbolic connections to character change, when subtly applied, can have a profound impact on the audience, enriching the narrative experience.

iii. Example: "Ebenezer Scrooge" in "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens → The name "Scrooge" immediately suggests a miserly and selfish character, emphasizing his love for money and his reluctance to share it with others.

e. Symbol for Story Word:

i. Concentration of Meaning: Symbols encapsulate entire story worlds or sets of forces, providing a cohesive and understandable image for the audience.

ii. Infusing with Magical Powers: Adding magical elements to natural worlds enhances their symbolic power, charging the setting with a force field that captivates the audience's imagination.

iii. Representation of Social Forces: Symbols are essential when portraying complex social environments or institutions, offering audiences a glimpse into intricate webs of power and influence.

iv. Example: "The Matrix" by Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski → The term "matrix" symbolically represents a complex web of enslaving threads, indicating a world controlled by unseen forces. This symbol warns audiences of the intricate nature of the story's social world and hints at hidden revelations.

f. Symbolic Actions

i. A single action can be part of a larger sequence of actions that comprise the plot
ii. Making an action symbolic connects it to another action or object and gives it charged meaning

iii. Symbolic actions stand out from the plot sequence and call attention to themselves
iv. Example: In Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff's pretend fight with the black knight for Cathy at their "castle" on the moors expresses their make-believe world of romance and Cathy's determination to live in a world of riches and nobility.

g. <u>Symbolic Objects</u>

i. Symbolic objects almost never exist alone in a story because alone they have almost no ability to refer to something else
ii. A web of objects, related by some kind of guiding principle, can form a deep, complex pattern of meaning, usually in support of the theme
iii. The designing principle of the story is the glue that turns a collection of individual objects into a cluster
iv. Example: In The Odyssey, the web of symbolic objects includes the journey, labyrinth, garden, tree, animals, ladder, underground, and talisman, which all represent aspects of the hero's journey and the theme of self-discovery.

h. <u>Reversing the Symbol Web:</u>

i. Using a prefabricated metaphorical symbol web can be predictable and self-conscious
ii. Reversing the symbol web by twisting the meaning of the symbols can force the audience to rethink their expectations
iii. This technique is known as undercutting the genre
iv. Example: In McCabe and Mrs. Miller, the classic Western symbols are reversed, such as the hero being a gambler and dandy who builds a town through capitalism, and the showdown happening in a

blinding snowstorm with no concern from the townspeople.

i. <u>Symbol Technique in Different Genres:</u>

i. Different genres have their own symbol webs and techniques
ii. Understanding these symbol webs can help a writer create a more effective story
iii. Example: In the Western genre, symbols include the horseman, six-gun, badge, and fence, which represent the themes of civilization vs. wilderness and right action. In the horror genre, symbols include light vs. dark, cross, and holy water, which represent the themes of good vs. evil and redemption.

j. <u>Creating a Symbol Web:</u>

i. A symbol web can be created by using a guiding principle or designing principle that connects the symbols
ii. The symbols should be consistent and coherent within the story
iii. The symbol web should support the theme and characters of the story
iv. Example: In Excalibur, the symbol web includes King Arthur, Merlin, the knights, Camelot, the Round Table, and Excalibur, which all represent the themes of leadership, power, and right action. The symbols are consistent and coherent within the story and support the characters and theme.

Notes on Symbolism in "The Lord of the Rings" by J.R.R. Tolkien:

k. Modern Cosmology and Mythology of England

i. Fusion of myth, legend, high romance.
ii. Draws from Greek, Norse mythology, Christianity, King Arthur, fairy tales.
iii. Allegorical relevance to modern world and time.

l. Story Symbol: The Ring

i. Object of unlimited power, symbolizing temptation and corruption.
ii. Reflects craving for power and its destructive nature.

m. Symbolic Characters

i. Characters represent good vs. evil, power levels, and species.
ii. Complexity adds depth to character interactions and themes.
iii. Heroes like Frodo embody sacrifice and humanity over strength.

n. Symbolic Antagonists

i. Morgoth, Mordred, Maugrim, Voldemort evoke primal evil.
ii. Sauron embodies absolute power and destructive intent.
iii. Saruman represents corruption by power.

o. Symbolic Theme

i. Christian thematic structure emphasizing good vs. evil.
ii. Evil rooted in love for and misuse of power.
iii. Good expressed through caring for life and sacrificial love.

p. Symbolic Worlds

i. Richly textured, natural and supernatural environments.
ii. Contrast between good (Lothlorien, Rivendell) and evil (Mordor, Isengard).

q. Symbolic Objects

i. Quest for symbolic objects, forged or found.
ii. The One Ring symbolizes false values and absolute power.
iii. Anduril, like Excalibur, represents rightful kingship and right action.
iv. Objects imbued with history and significance, contributing to the narrative's depth.

r. Lesson for Writers

i. Study of "The Lord of the Rings" offers insights into symbolism and myth-making techniques.
ii. Characters, objects, and themes are interconnected and contribute to the story's allegorical depth.

8. PLOT:

a. **Understanding Plot vs. Story:** Plot is the intricate weaving of characters and actions over the course of the entire story. It involves the management of suspense and mystery, as well as the withholding and revealing of information to the audience.

b. **Organic Plot Characteristics:** A good plot is organic, meaning it shows the actions leading to the hero's character change or explains why change is impossible. Each event is causally connected, essential, and proportionate in its pacing. The plot should feel natural to the main character rather than imposed by the author.

c. Major Plot Types:

i. Journey Plot:

- In the journey plot, the hero embarks on a physical or metaphorical journey where they encounter a series of opponents or challenges.
- The journey is supposed to facilitate character change, with each opponent's defeat leading to a small change in the hero.
- However, this plot type often fails to achieve organic potential because character changes are minimal, and the journey may feel episodic rather than cohesive.
- Writers often struggle with bringing back early characters in a natural way, especially in sprawling stories covering vast spaces and time periods.

ii. Three Unities Plot:

- Originating from ancient Greek drama, the three unities plot restricts the story to a short time frame, a single location, and one central action or storyline.
- While this approach ensures organic development within a confined space and time, it may limit the number and depth of revelations due to its constraints.
- Character interactions and conflicts are intensified by the close proximity and continuous presence of opponents, but there may be fewer opportunities for surprise or complexity.

iii. Reveals Plot:

- The reveals plot focuses on hiding information about opponents from the hero and audience, leading to surprises and character development.
- Opponents are skilled at scheming, and much about them remains hidden until key moments of revelation.
- When executed properly, this plot type is organic because surprises emerge from the characters' interactions and challenges, driving the hero's growth or downfall.
- It's popular in genres like detective stories and thrillers, maximizing audience enjoyment through shocking revelations.

iv. <u>Antiplot:</u>

- Antiplot is characterized by a disregard for traditional plot structures in favor of character exploration and subtlety.
- Writers employing antiplot techniques often prioritize character development over plot progression, experimenting with unconventional narrative styles and structures.
- Techniques such as point of view shifts, non-linear storytelling, and digressions serve to deepen character complexity and present a more nuanced view of human nature.
- While antiplot may feel fragmented, it can still be organic if storytelling techniques align with the characters' experiences and perceptions.

v. <u>Genre Plot:</u>

- Genre plots adhere to predetermined conventions and structures associated with

specific genres, such as romance, mystery, or science fiction.

- These plots often feature big revelations that are expected within the genre but may lack uniqueness or individuality for the main character.
- While genre plots can be efficient and familiar to audiences, they may feel mechanical or generic due to their adherence to established formulas and tropes.

vi. <u>Multistrand Plot:</u>

- Multistrand plots involve multiple interconnected storylines or plot strands, often within a single group or setting.
- Each strand is driven by a separate character, and the narrative crosscuts between these strands to create tension and connection.
- When executed well, multistrand plots offer insights into group dynamics and character relationships, with each strand contributing to the overall thematic development.
- This approach shifts the focus from individual heroes to collective experiences, providing a broader understanding of human behavior and interaction.

d. CREATING AN ORGANIC PLOT:

STEP	CHARACTER	PLOT	STORY WORLD	MORAL ARGUMENT
1.	Self-revelation, need, and desire			
2.	Ghost		Story world	
3.	Weakness and need			
4.		Inciting event		
5.	Desire			
6.	Ally or allies			
7.	Opponent	Mystery		
8.	Fake-ally opponent			
9.	Changed desire and motive	First revelation and decision		
10.		Plan		
11.		Opponent's plan and main counterattack		
12.		Drive		
13.				Attack by ally
14.		Apparent defeat		
15.	Obsessive drive, changed desire and motive	Second revelation and decision		
16.		Audience revelation		
17.		Third revelation and decision		
18.		Gate, gauntlet, visit to death		
19.		Battle		
20.	Self-revelation			
21.				Moral decision
22.	New equilibrium			

i. **Self-Revelation, Need, and Desire:**
   - **Starting Point:** Establish the hero's journey from self-revelation to weakness, need, and desire.
   - **Key Questions:**
     a. What will the hero learn at the end?
     b. What does the hero know at the beginning?
     c. What is the hero wrong about at the beginning?
   - **Example:** Casablanca
     a. **Self-Revelation:** Rick realizes he cannot withdraw from the fight for freedom simply because he was hurt by love.
     b. **Psychological Need:** To overcome bitterness toward Ilsa and regain faith in ideals.
     c. **Moral Need:** To stop prioritizing himself over others.
     d. **Desire:** To get Ilsa back.
     e. **Initial Error:** Rick thinks of himself as detached from the world's affairs.

ii. **Ghost and Story World:**
   - **Ghost:** An event from the past haunting the hero, often the source of weakness.
   - **Story World:** Where the hero lives, expresses weaknesses, needs, and desires.
   - **Ghost Types:** Past event haunting the hero or absence of a ghost in a paradise world.
   - **Key Points:**
     a. a detailed story world that reflects the hero's journey.
     b. Withhold details about the hero's ghost to intrigue the audience.

- **Example:** Casablanca
    a. **Ghost:** Rick's haunted past includes fighting against Fascists and being deserted by Ilsa.
    b. **Story World:** Casablanca, a mix of political powers and trapped refugees, reflects Rick's cynicism and selfishness.

iii. Weakness and Need:

- **Weakness:** Serious character flaws damaging the hero psychologically and/or morally.
- **Need:** What the hero must fulfill to have a better life, often requiring overcoming weaknesses.
- **Problem:** Initial crisis reflecting the hero's weakness, though less crucial than weakness and need.
- **Key Point:** Ensure the hero's moral weakness directly harms others at the story's start.
- **Example:** Tootsie
    a. **Weaknesses:** Michael is selfish, arrogant, and a liar.
    b. **Psychological Need:** To overcome arrogance toward women and learn to give and receive love.
    c. **Moral Need:** To stop lying and using women for personal gain.
    d. **Problem:** Michael struggles to find work due to his horrible personality.

iv. Inciting Event:

- **Inciting Event:** External event sparking the hero into action and connecting need and desire.

- **Key Point:** Choose an event that propels the hero from paralysis to action, worsening their situation.
- **Catchphrase:** "From the frying pan into the fire" - the inciting event worsens the hero's predicament.
- **Example:** Casablanca
- **Inciting Event:** Ilsa and Laszlo entering Rick's bar shake him out of his detached position.

v. **Desire:**
- **Desire:** The hero's specific goal driving the plot, starting at a low level and increasing in importance.
- **Plot Technique:** Increase desire's intensity and stakes throughout the story, rather than introducing new desires.
- **Example:** Casablanca's desire for Ilsa shifts as the story progresses, while Tootsie's desire evolves from getting an acting job to pursuing Julie.

vi. **Ally or Allies:**
- **Ally:** Character(s) aiding the hero in overcoming obstacles, usually with their own desires.
- **Key Points:**
  a. Allies should not overshadow the hero.
  b. Consider giving allies their own desire lines for depth.
- **Example:** Casablanca
- **Allies:** Carl, Sacha, Emil, Abdul, and Sam aid Rick in various capacities, contributing to the story's dynamics.

vii. **Subplot**

- Must affect the hero's main plot or it shouldn't be present at all.
- Should dovetail neatly with the main plot, usually near the end.
- Subplot character is usually not the ally; they drive a different but related plot.
- Commonly seen in love stories, enriching character, theme, and texture.
- Limited time to work through seven key steps if incorporating a subplot.
- *Example*: In "Moonstruck," subplots involving the heroine's parents deal with fidelity in marriage, complementing the main plot's themes.

viii. **Opponent and/or Mystery**

- Opponent is crucial for the hero's journey, representing the character who wants to prevent the hero from reaching their goal.
- A mysterious opponent adds depth, requiring the hero to uncover and defeat them, making success more satisfying.
- In certain genres like detective or thriller, a mystery can compensate for a hidden opponent.
- *Example*: In "Casablanca," various opponents, including Ilsa and Major Strasser, provide different layers of opposition for Rick, complicating his journey.

ix. **Fake-Ally Opponent**

- Appears as an ally but is actually an opponent or working for the main opponent.

- Increases the opponent's power by hiding their true intentions, forcing the hero and audience to uncover the deception.
- Often undergoes a fascinating change, torn between loyalty to the opponent and the desire to see the hero win.
- *Example*: Captain Renault in "Casablanca" initially seems friendly to Rick but ultimately reveals his true allegiance to the Nazis, adding complexity to the plot.

x. **Second Revelation and Decision: Obsessive Drive, Changed Desire and Motive**
   - After an apparent defeat, the hero receives a new piece of information that reignites their drive and obsession to win.
   - The hero becomes tyrannical in their quest for the goal, willing to do almost anything to succeed.
   - This revelation leads to a change in desire and motive, propelling the story in a new direction.
   - *Example*: In "Tootsie," Michael receives an offer for another year's contract, reigniting his desire to escape his masquerade and get close to Julie, leading to obsessive determination to break free.

xi. **Audience Revelation**
   - Provides a pivotal moment of new information for the audience, often revealing the true identity of a fake-ally opponent.
   - Injects excitement into a slower section of the plot.
   - Demonstrates the true power of the opposition.

- Creates a shift in the relationship between hero and audience, as the audience gains knowledge ahead of the hero.
- Allows the audience to step back and observe the hero's overall process of change.
- *Example: In "Casablanca," the audience learns that Captain Renault has betrayed Rick by calling Major Strasser instead of the airport tower, marking a significant turning point.*

xii. **Third Revelation and Decision**

- Hero learns crucial information about the opponent, often the true identity of a fake-ally.
- Despite increased understanding of the opposition's power, the hero becomes more determined to win.
- Hero's changed desires and motives drive subsequent actions towards resolution.
- *Example: In "Tootsie," Michael learns the consequences of his deception when Sandy confronts him about the chocolates he gave her as Dorothy, leading him to seek a way out of his predicament.*

xiii. **Gate, Gauntlet, Visit to Death**

- Near the story's end, the conflict intensifies, leading the hero to face unbearable pressure.
- The hero undergoes a psychological visit to "death," realizing the finite nature of life and the need to take a stand.
- Symbolized by passing through a narrow gate or facing a gauntlet of challenges.
- *Example: In "Casablanca," Rick's journey to the airport with Ilsa, Laszlo, and Renault, while*

being pursued by Major Strasser, represents the gate, gauntlet, and visit to death.

xiv. **Battle**

- Final conflict determining the outcome of the story.
- Should emphasize the clash of ideas or values rather than mere physical violence.
- Brings together all characters and storylines, leading to the hero fulfilling their need and desire.
- Marks the explosion of the story's theme in the minds of the audience.
- *Example: In "Tootsie," Michael's revelation on live television shocks the audience and characters, resolving the central conflict of his identity.*

xv. **Self-Revelation**

- Hero undergoes profound change and learns their true self.
- Moral and psychological self-revelation may occur, leading to a newfound understanding of how to act towards others.
- Should be sudden, shattering, and new, representing a significant moment of growth or realization.
- *Example: In "Casablanca," Rick's decision to shoot Major Strasser reveals his true moral convictions, marking a transformative self-revelation.*

xvi. **Plot Technique: Double Reversal**

- **Character Development**: Both the hero and the main opponent should have weaknesses and needs.
- **Humanization of Antagonist**: Make sure the opponent is portrayed as human, capable of learning and changing.
- **Self-Revelation**: Provide a self-revelation for both the hero and the opponent during or after the battle.
- **Connection of Revelations**: Connect the self-revelations of the hero and the opponent, ensuring that each learns something from the other.
- **Author's Moral Vision**: The moral vision of the author should reflect the best of what both characters learn.
- *Example*: In "Casablanca", both Rick and Renault experience self-revelations. Rick regains his idealism and sense of self, realizing the importance of sacrifice for the greater good. Meanwhile, Renault announces his newfound patriotism, indicating a change in his character as well.

xvii. **Plot Technique: Thematic Revelation**

- **Audience Impact**: Thematic revelation provides insights for the audience on how people should act and live in the world.
- **Avoiding Preachiness**: Draw abstract and general themes from specific character actions or gestures to avoid sounding preachy.
- **Symbolic Impact**: Use particular gestures or actions with symbolic impact on the audience to convey thematic revelations effectively.

- *Example*: In "Places in the Heart", the final scene in the church portrays universal forgiveness and reconciliation through the act of communion. The diverse characters, including former adversaries and those who have suffered, come together in a moment of shared forgiveness, conveying a profound thematic revelation to the audience.

xviii. **New Equilibrium**

- **Character Growth**: After fulfilling desires and needs, the hero reaches a new equilibrium, either at a higher or lower level than before.
- **Impact of Self-Revelation**: The hero's self-revelation influences the new equilibrium, indicating growth or change in character.
- *Example*: In "Tootsie", Michael's honesty and selflessness lead to reconciliation and the beginning of a real romance with Julie, indicating his growth and a higher level of personal integrity in the new equilibrium.

e. REVELATIONS SEQUENCE:

i. Revelations and Plot:

- Logical Sequence:
  a. Reveals must occur in an order that the hero would logically learn them.
- Building Intensity:
  a. Each reveal should ideally be stronger than the last, building drama.
- Increasing Pace:
  a. Reveals should come at an increasing pace to heighten drama.

ii. **Reversal Reveals:**

- Most powerful type of reveal, where the audience's understanding of the story is turned on its head.
- Examples: The Sixth Sense, The Usual Suspects.

iii. **Using a Storyteller:**

- Techniques for Using a Storyteller:
- Realize the storyteller is likely the main character. The act of storytelling is a form of self-revelation.
- Introduce the storyteller in a dramatic situation. This creates suspense and sets the stage for the story.
- Find a good reason for the storyteller to tell the story. The reason should be connected to a problem the storyteller faces in the present.
- The storyteller should not be all-knowing at the beginning. A struggle to understand the past can make the storyteller more interesting.
- Use a unique structure for telling the story. A non-chronological approach can add depth and intrigue.
- The storyteller should explore different versions of the story. This reflects the difficulty of finding the truth.
- End the storytelling frame before the story's conclusion. Allow the act of storytelling to impact the storyteller in the present.
- The act of storytelling should lead to a self-revelation. The storyteller gains a new understanding of themselves.
- Consider the moral implications of storytelling. Explore how storytelling can be destructive or immoral.

- The act of storytelling should lead to a final dramatic event. This event is often a moral decision made by the storyteller.

iv. **Common Fallacies to Avoid**

- A character's death does not guarantee the full truth will be revealed. The search for meaning is an ongoing process.
- The true story is not revealed at any one point. The meaning of the story can change with each retelling.

v. **The Importance of Creativity**

- The act of storytelling and the creativity it requires is a core theme.
- The hero's accomplishment is often related to their ability to tell a story.

vi. **Considerations When Using Multiple Storytellers**

- Too many storytellers can distance the audience from the story.

9. SCENE WEB:

a. Importance of Scene Weaving

- Jane Austen and Charles Dickens are renowned for their scene weaving, which continues to captivate audiences.
- Scene weaving is a crucial step in storytelling, functioning as an intricate tapestry of scenes that form the plot's architecture.

b. Definition of a Scene

- A scene is a single action occurring in one time and place.

- Scenes are the basic units of what happens in the story, experienced in real-time by the audience.

c. Purpose of Scene Weaving

i. Scene weaving (scene list, outline, or breakdown) is the final step before writing the full story or script.
ii. It provides a detailed overview of the plot, allowing writers to see how the story fits together beneath the surface.
iii. It helps identify the single main action of each scene and ensures each scene is essential to the story.

d. Steps in Scene Weaving

i. **Scene List**: List every scene in one line, focusing on the essential action.
   - Example from "The Godfather":
   - Michael saves the Don from assassination at the hospital.
   - Michael accuses police captain McCluskey of working for Sollozzo; the Captain slugs him.
   - Michael suggests killing the Captain and Sollozzo.
   - Clemenza shows Michael how to execute Sollozzo and the Captain.

ii. **Tagging Scenes**: Tag scenes where a structure step (e.g., desire, plan, apparent defeat) occurs.

iii. **Reordering Scenes**: Focus on getting the overall sequence and juxtapositions right.

iv. **Combining Scenes**: Combine scenes to avoid unnecessary ones, ensuring each is packed with essential action.

v. **Cutting or Adding Scenes**: Trim unnecessary scenes and add new ones where there are gaps.

e. Key Points for Effective Scene Weaving

- **Order by Structure, Not Chronology**: Choose scenes based on their importance to the hero's development, not merely by time sequence.
- **Juxtaposition of Scenes**: Pay special attention to the contrast between scenes in terms of content, proportion, and pacing.
- **Techniques for Juxtaposition**
  a. Contrast of content, sight and sound, and timing.
  b. Ensuring subplots and main plots are balanced and build the narrative drive.

f. Multistrand Plot Scene Weaving

i. **Television Drama**: Often involves three to five major storylines, each with its own hero.
ii. **Juxtaposition of Plotlines**: Compare different characters' solutions to similar problems.
iii. **Seven Major Structure Steps**: Each plotline must cover these steps to ensure completeness.
iv. **Dramatic Density**: Multiple main characters and plotlines prevent lulls, maintaining narrative drive.

g. Practical Exercise: Scene Weave

i. **Scene List**: Describe each scene in one sentence.
ii. **Twenty-two-Step Tags**: Tag scenes with relevant structure steps.
iii. **Ordering Scenes**: Ensure the sequence builds by structure, not chronology.
  - Cut unnecessary scenes.
  - Combine scenes where possible.

- Add scenes where there are gaps in the story's development.

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